



THE 7 HABITS IN ECUADOR

COLEGIO AMERICANO

Colegio Americano of Guayaquil, Ecuador is a private, bilingual and bicultural school offering instruction from preschool through high school. It was founded in 1941. Some classes are taught in Spanish, but core classes are in English. The smartly-dressed 1500 plus students come from 23 countries, and, thanks to half a dozen university partnerships (Florida Atlantic University, Jacksonville University, Universidad de Las Comunicaciones—Chile, and others), 20 percent of the graduates of the International Baccalaureate program go to college in the United States, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Argentina, and other countries, and 96 percent of them go with scholarships. The Inter-



national Baccalaureate Diploma students take examinations every November in biology, chemistry, geography, math, and physics, as well as history, environmental sciences, and English literature.

Adding to the scholarly mix on campus is an English language academy and, since 2008, Blue Hill College, which provides opportunities for Ecuador to develop future business leaders by offering night school courses in marketing, finance, and business administration.

Students also participate in such extracurricular activities as dance, violin, guitar, chess, and a full range of sports. The school soccer team has represented Ecuador in the mini World Cup, and the baseball team came in first in tournaments in New York City. Girls' basketball and the cheerleading squad have also placed well in competitions.

Walking on the colorful campus, one would never know that just a few years ago, the school was in serious difficulty. Fund-raisers were failures, the physical plant needed serious upgrading, student and teacher morale was low—especially the morale of some of the 20 or so



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That Was Then

Today, visitors find a lush, beautiful campus (“We planted a lot of vegetation,” explained Dr. Keith J.D. Miller, headmaster), engaged students (mostly Ecuadorian from upper middle to upper class families), and teachers and administrators who, on top of their official work, devote several evenings a week and some Saturdays to school activities. Five computer labs give students access to the Internet, and free Wi-Fi is available all over campus.

Facilities for the Primary School are modern and attractive, and air conditioning has been installed in many building. The school journal is filled with success stories of student achievement and community support.

The Transformative Effect of the 7 Habits

When Dr. Miller arrived in 2002 to take the leadership of Colegio Americano, he knew he had to do something to solve all the problems he saw around him. He had heard about the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People some twenty years before and decided that was what the school needed. He gave FranklinCovey a telephone call.



Before long, the 7 Habits were being taught to the both the members of the school board and to the top leaders of the administration. That was in September, 2002, and that training was followed shortly thereafter with training for the secondary teachers.

After that training came dramatic changes: new uniforms for students, a new school logo, a refurbished physical plant—in short a new image for the school from inside out. The staff and administration also developed a new mission statement, and efforts at outreach were intensified.



The change in campus atmosphere produced a change in community support for the school. Whereas in the past, the PTA was lucky to raise US\$4,000 a year in fund-raisers, after the 7 Habits, fund-raising rose to US\$30,000 a year.

All the problems did not disappear; indeed, financing the school remains a difficult problem, tuition hikes cause concern from parents, and there are other issues. But the campus atmosphere, after 7 Habits, has been decidedly improved.

When asked what the school would be like if Keith Miller had never heard of FranklinCovey or the 7 Habits, he replied, “It would be closed. The Covey method is perfectly suited for schools.”

Source: Interviews with Keith J.D. Miller, Jacqueline Pena, Billy Dwyer, and others, July 1, 2009, Guayaquil, Ecuador. Dr. Miller was Director General (Headmaster) from 2002 to 2011.